

munias (Red or Spotted) in large numbers in sugarcane fields, but never get the Green Munia in these flocks.

Other birds seen in the vicinity of the Green munia sharing the same resources were the Red munia (*Estrilda amandava*), Spotted munia (*Lonchura punctulata*), Whitethroated munia (*L. malabarica*), Blackheaded munia (*L. malacca*), Baya (*Ploceus philippinus*), Black-throated baya (*P. benghalensis*) and Streaked weaver (*P. manyar*).

The Green munia is not a shy bird; it could be approached as close as 8-10 m and was found near human habitations. When approached they used to fly to nearby bushes, and while doing so the green colour on their back perfectly camouflaged them with the surroundings. Often it was seen that two birds, most likely a pair, would sit on a branch and when excited would flatten their tail, pointing towards each other while uttering a high pitched note.

According to a TRAFFIC-India report on live birds (Ahmed and Menon, 1995), it seems that trapping is a threat to its population which is true to

a very large extent. Previous visits to Lucknow, and information from Mt. Abu have also confirmed that most isolated populations near these places and in many areas of Madhya Pradesh have been wiped out by bird trappers as this bird can be easily caught with baiting and decoy birds, and trappers can catch most of the individuals of an area.

There is a need for a full fledged project on the Green Munia to study the various aspects of its biology and also the impact of trapping the species.

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March 31, 1995

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#### 14. COMMENTS ON SOME NEW BIRD RECORDS FROM TAMILNADU

In a recent issue of the *Journal*, S. Balachandran has reported a few new records in certain bird species in Tamilnadu (*JBNHS*: 91(2): 314; 317-318; 322-323; 1994). These include breeding records of Coot and occurrences of the Indian Courser, Black Redstart and Small Minivet. I have a few comments to make on these notes.

The breeding of Coot (*Fulica atra*) in Coimbatore (Tamilnadu) in 1983 was earlier reported by P.S. Sivaprasad (*Blackbuck*, 2(2): 17-19, 1986). These birds continue to breed in the same area and even recently, in 1995, young birds were seen

(Sivaprasad, pers. comm.). Breeding of Coots has also been reported recently in Kerala by C. Sushanth Kumar (*Newsletter for Birdwatchers*, 33: 55, 1993).

Although the Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) is not a common bird, it is certainly not as rare as suggested by Balachandran. It occurs mostly in dry, stony, open areas, dried-up lake margins etc., and I have seen birds in suitable habitats around Madras in small numbers. These include open areas near Vendanthangal, Velacherry (outskirts of Madras city), near Thirupporur (off the old Mahabalipuram Road) and along the road from

Gummudipoondi to Sathyavedu (north of Madras city) and at Kaliveli. I am sure the bird occurs in appropriate habitats elsewhere in the state.

The Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) is an uncommon winter visitor around Madras and has been recorded in different years at the Guindy National Park and the environs of the Chembarambakkam Lake. Both male and female birds have been seen in the winter months. It has also been recorded recently in Kerala (Neelakantan *et al.* *A. Book of Kerala Birds (Part I)* WWF-Kerala, pp 88-89, 1993).

The Small minivet (*Pericrocotus cinna-*

*momeus*) is a fairly common bird in the coastal areas of Madras and is seen in Guindy National Park, Theosophical Society Campus, and Madras Christian College Campus, besides other fairly wooded village environs and scrub jungles. I am surprised that this species has not been recorded at Pt. Calimere earlier.

March 31, 1995

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# 15. NEW LOCALITIES FOR BROWN HILL TORTOISE *MANOURIA EMYS* (SCHLECAGEL AND MULLER) FROM KARBI ANGLONG, ASSAM

The Brown hill tortoise (*Manouria emys*) is also called the Asian brown tortoise, Burmese brown tortoise and Eastern hill tortoise. It is the largest land tortoise of Asia. The colour of the carapace is brownish to brownish-black. The species attains a length of upto 60 cm.

In India, this tortoise has been recorded in Nagaland (Anderson, 1872), Nongkhylllem Reserved Forest in Meghalaya (Das, 1991: Colour Guide), Langting-Mupa Reserved Forest and some other localities of North Cachar Hills in south-central Assam (Anderson, 1871, 1872). Outside, it extends upto Sumatra.

In March, 1992, I examined a partly damaged carapace in Kaliyani Reserved Forest of northern part of Karbi Anglong district in central Assam (26° 25' N; 93° 35' E). Only the straight carapace width could

be measured (37 cm). In October, 1995, a live tortoise was caught by some local tribals in Tarapung area (26° 30' N; 93° 30' E) of the same district and brought to Bokakhat market near Kaziranga National Park for sale. It was then rescued by the civil officials and sent to the Assam State Zoo at Guwahati.

It measured (in cm), Straight line carapace length: 53; Curved carapace length: 62; Straight line carapace width: 36; Curved carapace width: 56; Plastron (greatest length): 56; Plastron length (notch to notch): 52; Shell height: 21. It weighed 21 kg.

September 17, 1996

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# 16. THE KEELED BOX TURTLE *PYXIDEA MOUHOTII* GRAY - A NEW RECORD FOR MANIPUR

The keeled box turtle *Pyxidea mouhotii* Gray, 1862, has been recorded from only a few localities

in the north-east of India, i.e., North Cachar Hills (Das, 1991) and Karbi Anglong (Choudhury, 1993;